

TESTIMONY OF

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On

The DOT Kids Implementation and Efficiency Act of 2002

For the

U.S. Senate Commerce, Science and Transportation Committee  
Subcommittee on Science, Technology and Space

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Chairman and members of the Committee, I am honored to appear before your subcommittee today and express the views of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children (NCMEC) regarding the "DOT Kids Implementation and Efficiency Act of 2002".

The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children is very aware of and concerned about the amount of inappropriate material that children are exposed to, wittingly or unwittingly, on the Internet. Moreover, the increase in incidents of online victimization of children by sexual predators is cause for all concerned citizens to take appropriate actions to safeguard our children in Cyberspace.

This bill creates a safe space for children on the Internet by utilizing the United States country code domain (".us"). Just like creating a children's section in a library, this bill creates a protected place on the Internet for children to learn, grow, and play.

This bill is necessary for a number of reasons:

- There are few places designed for children on the Internet. Given the vastness of the Internet, only a dedicated space can create a true safe zone for children.
- By creating an Internet space that will only contain child-friendly material, parents, children, and educators will have a healthy place children can explore and learn on the Internet. This bill provides a balanced approach that provides safety, encourages learning, and gives parents peace of mind.

A study funded by the National Center and published in June 2000 by Dr. David Finkelhor of the Univ. of New Hampshire revealed that: 1 in 33 youth were aggressively solicited online, 1 in 4 youth encountered unwanted pornography online and 1 in 5 youth were sexually solicited online in the past year.

We at the National Center's Exploited Child Unit are all too aware of serious incidents where children who communicate in the Internet via Chat Room, IRC or Instant Messaging with individuals who they believe are peers or friends, but who eventually turn out to be individuals who are not who they say they are. All too frequently, we see children traveling or meeting these individuals and find out too late that they have put themselves in harm's way.

Content on the Internet that is currently accessible to children deals with nudity, sexually explicit material, hate and racist, graphic violence, bomb making and explosives and tobacco, alcohol and drug use. The type of criminal activity that children may encounter on the Internet is Cyber Stalking, Viruses, Hacking programs, Gambling, illegal sale of narcotics, weapons, Fraud and pirated material. Any created "safe harbor or environment" would be to the advantage of our nation's children.

Your commitment to enact legislation that would establish a child-friendly space on the Internet by providing access to material that is both suitable for minors and is not harmful to minors is an important step in protecting our most vulnerable population from computer-facilitated exploitation. We commend you and your colleagues for this important initiative.

As the Science, Technology and Space Subcommittee moves forward on this legislation, please know the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children supports the goals outlined in the “DOT Kids Implementation and Efficiency Act of 2002” and would urge consideration by the Senate of this important legislation.